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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-seventh session

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Rodrigo **Yáñez Pilgrim** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

Addendum

Coordination questions: report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

(Item 5 (a))

A. Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2006/07

1. At its 4th meeting, on 12 June 2007, the Committee considered the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for 2006/07 (E/2007/69). The Director of CEB introduced the report and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of it.

2. The report highlighted the underlying issues and major developments that had characterized the activities of CEB and its high-level committees on programmes and management during the 2006/07 period. Major issues in the programme area included the new mandates entrusted to the Economic and Social Council, the evolution of "One United Nations" at the country level, employment and the decent work agenda, the emerging issue of aid-for-trade and the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (Brussels Programme of Action). In its report, CEB had also identified the revitalization of its work on support for African development and on climate change as two important issues for its forthcoming agenda. A major issue addressed in the management area, in the light of discussions on United Nations reform and system-wide coherence, was the need to accelerate work on the harmonization of the United Nations system business practices. Other management issues addressed included the development of

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a common approach to the sharing of information contained in internal audit reports, the review of the financing of the United Nations security management system and its cost-sharing formula and the development of a senior management network. In addition to the specific programme and management issues, the high-level committee on programmes and the high-level committee on management had, during the reporting period, also collectively taken forward the cross-cutting issues of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, the development of a common approach on results-based management and the further strengthening of the United Nations Staff College. The two Committees had also endorsed work towards the development of a United Nations system-wide evaluation mechanism.

3. A consistent theme throughout the period under review had been the need to substantially improve the functioning of CEB, in the light of an increased sense of opportunity and expectations for a more effective response to major global issues, and to ensure that all the analytical and operational capacities in the system were brought to bear in meeting the challenges and in maximizing the system's responsiveness to the needs of Member States and the international community. The Secretary-General had therefore requested the Directors-General of the International Labour Organization and the World Trade Organization to lead a review of CEB, with the aim of enabling it to assume a strengthened role in the management of system-wide coordination under his leadership and to develop a more integrated CEB framework to address policy, management and operational issues coherently.

Discussion

4. Delegations thanked the Director of the CEB secretariat for an informative report and for the useful information that it contained on the major developments in inter-agency cooperation within the framework of CEB. Support was expressed for the work of the Board, and the opportunity to take stock of its progress was welcomed. It was observed that the report had addressed the key issues faced by the international community, and the importance of United Nations system collaboration on those issues was emphasized.

5. Delegations noted the role of CEB in advancing a culture of coordination in the United Nations system and were encouraged by the willingness demonstrated by CEB member organizations in collaborating to enhance United Nations system-wide coherence. The importance of results and enhanced effectiveness for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was in this regard emphasized.

6. CEB progress and achievements with regard to the development of a coordinated United Nations system response to such issues as the midterm review of the Brussels Programme of Action, and to ensuring that employment and decent work was addressed throughout the United Nations system were noted with satisfaction. While the attention paid in the report to the issue of gender equality and gender mainstreaming was appreciated, it was also recognized that further progress was necessary in that important area.

7. Delegations welcomed the inclusion of support for African development and of climate change as emerging issues on the CEB agenda. It was stressed that CEB had an important role to play with regard to climate change, given that the issue could not successfully be addressed by any United Nations system organization or department working in isolation.

8. Appreciation was expressed for CEB endeavours to ensure that the normative, analytical and operational capacities of the system were brought to bear in meeting challenges at the country level. While the efforts to promote enhanced United Nations coherence at the country level were supported, delegations at the same time also emphasized the experimental nature of the eight "One United Nations" pilot projects at the country level and concurred with the CEB view that progress on the projects should not prejudge the outcome of the intergovernmental deliberations on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the General Assembly.

9. Delegations took note of the Board's activities and efforts in the management area. Support was expressed for the harmonization of United Nations management practices and for the progress made on the financial agreement for the United Nations security management system. Concerns were raised, however, regarding the CEB intention to prepare a study on the functioning of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). It was recalled that ICSC was a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and that the function of assessing its work belonged to Member States. It was highlighted that the Commission had recently been the subject of a comprehensive review at the initiative of CEB and of Member States and that, by adopting its resolution 61/239, the Assembly had closed consideration of the issue and had agreed not to return to the review of the functioning of ICSC in the near future. With regard to the confidentiality of internal audit reports, agreement was expressed in principle with the way in which the issue had been raised and addressed in the annual overview report. The way forward proposed by the high-level committee for management for establishing a common approach to disclosure of information was supported in principle. It was noted, however, that the practice of providing information selectively to different member States of some agencies should be discontinued. It was affirmed that the review of the practice of disclosure of information contained in the reports on internal audits conducted by CEB should not aim at revising the decisions of intergovernmental bodies, in particular of the Assembly, on transparency and access of Member States to internal audit data.

10. Delegations noted CEB efforts to enhance its own effectiveness and observed that the Secretary-General had requested the Directors-General of the International Labour Organization and the World Trade Organization to lead the review of the Board. The belief was expressed that the review would lead to improvements in global system-wide coordination. The view was also expressed that there was a need to review the functioning of CEB, as well as its coherence, relevance and efficiency, as Member States wanted to see the real impact of its work. This was particularly important, it was noted, in view of the fact that CEB had raised the issue of increasing the level of resources for its secretariat. In that context, attention was drawn to the relevance and importance of more control by intergovernmental bodies over CEB activities, as well as improvements in accountability and transparency.

11. Several delegations sought additional information on issues addressed in the report, such as CEB support for furthering the objectives of the aid-for-trade initiative and the proposal to establish a United Nations system-wide evaluation mechanism linked to CEB. The view was furthermore expressed that the report did not sufficiently highlight the achievements of the CEB structure and that it did not sufficiently address the concrete results of CEB work. In addition, CEB was requested to provide further information in its future annual overview reports on specific coordination challenges encountered and how to resolve them. As far as the

annual CEB report was concerned, the view was expressed that Member States wanted it to be more informative, demonstrating what concrete results had been achieved by CEB during the reporting period and what had been the real impact of its activities for organizations and for Member States. In responding to the requests of delegates for further information, the Director of the CEB secretariat noted that the limitations imposed on the length of the report prevented detailed treatment of many important topics.

Conclusions and recommendations

12. The Committee took note of the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2006/07.

13. The Committee welcomed the high priority CEB continued to attach to effective and coordinated United Nations system support for Africa and urged CEB to develop concerted strategies for efficient and coherent collaboration of the various agencies to address development issues, in particular the continued needs of the African continent, through an integrated United Nations framework.

14. The Committee questioned the appropriateness of the proposal of the high-level committee on management for a study on the functioning of ICSC. It also stressed that CEB did not have the authority to conduct the review of a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. It further recalled that the Assembly had recently concluded its review of the Commission and had made exhaustive decisions to this effect. In view of the above, the Committee considered the proposal of the high-level committee on management to be redundant.

15. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Board to revoke its approval of the proposal in the light of Assembly resolution 61/239 and in view of the fact that it exceeded the authority of CEB.

16. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request CEB to ensure maximum possible cooperation with, and support of, ICSC, in particular the need to adhere to ICSC decisions and to implement them in a prompt manner, with a view to harmonizing business practices in the common system.

17. The Committee took note of the deliberations by CEB on "One United Nations" at the country level. In that context, the Committee stressed that the recommendations made by the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence should be implemented after the General Assembly had reached a decision on the whole proposal.

18. The Committee welcomed the initiative of CEB to conduct a review of CEB functioning and emphasized the need to make the Board more efficient, results-oriented, transparent and accountable to Member States.

19. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request CEB to continue to monitor the effective collaboration of system-wide efforts against hunger and poverty.